On Wings of Song

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ON WINGS OF SONG

FRANCIS BEAUCHESNE THORNTON

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To Donna Stella

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Late Spring

With laughter all the village folk
Would watch her pass;
Old Mary Polk in glaring gown
With clicking beads of glass.
She, once so drab in all the years
Her father lived, now glowed
A gaudy melon-flower, a rose . . .
A cabbage-rose full blown.

Poor fools, they laughed to see her—
Tapped their heads, quite numb
To her awakened soul that shone
After eclipse. Not one could plumb
Her spirit's ecstasy, where dim lanes flung
Out bridal streamers. Lanes long gloomed
With winter where,
At length, the lilac bloomed.

To Donna Stella

Donna Stella, Donna Stella,
Beauty has a constant face—
Like some star undimmed she glimmers
Out of silent deeps of space,
Calm and tranquil eyed with musing,
Young when worlds have run their race.
Fortior quam spes quam bella,
Donna Stella, Donna Stella.

Donna Stella, Donna Stella,
On beauty's face what glory lies.
Is it lightning dawn that crouches
Past the veil of paradise?
No, it is the calm which lingers
May-bright in young children's eyes.
Fortior quam spes quam bella,
Donna Sella, Donna Stella.

Donna Stella, Donna Stella,
Where can I sheer beauty find?
In the primrose fire of springtide,
Autumn pomp or winter wind?
Where, but on your face
The mirror of your own pellucid mind.
Fortior quam spes quam bella,
Donna Stella, Donna Stella.

To a Night-Club Idler

You see in him a shallow, useless idler
In faultless dress, who haunts the night-club life;
A bachelor with too much gold to ever spend it,
Devoid of force, with neither child nor wife.
Donna, you err!
His eyes are lit with dreams we cannot fathom,
That gamin face is thirsty not for wine;
He is eternal Pierrot, sharp etched with beauty,
Who seeks to find the newest Columbine.
His slim, arched feet are weary for the forest,
Where elfin moons make dark grotesqueries
Among the little mimes of postured shadow,
And stars are hung like lanthorns in the trees.
Columbine has fled the wood,
He needs must follow
Where silver shoes tap out the unseen dawn,
But in his heart he knows that chanticleer is crowing
And Night has scattered star dust on the lawn.

Peter . . . On the Road to Rome

"Come, dawn is here. Was it a cock that crowed?
Your pardon, Mark . . These tears! A weary load
Lies heavy on my heart. Yes, yes, I know
Much water's gone to sea since long ago,
And those old griefs. Why man, it seems
Like yesterday: Each night I see in dreams
His face by brutal soldiers ringed, a leaf
It seemed which mocking frost, the thief,
Leaves hanging when the winy sap has dried.
He stood stock still, and then a far cock cried
From Pilate's stable or the temple court—
'Twas just a moment . . thus He stood! however short,
It dragged like unguessed years since Time began.
And then I wept . . . Not all the seas which span
The Roman coasts can wash me clean. That stain
Of sorrow etched upon His beauty! Not for gain
Like Judas I denied Him thrice, and yet
He trusted me and prayed. I can't forget
How He proclaimed me first of all the band
The day I hailed Him God. You understand?
But oh, that look He shot me in the hall!
I'd give my life, if I could blot it all . . .
Yes afterward I saw Him much . . Once by the sea
He cooked our fish for us in Galilee;
But gall, and not the honey is my part
Until I die. Let's Romeward. Come, blithe heart!
Some day the Lord will set the matter right . . . .
The sky is red, there will be rain tonight.

The Hermit Replies

The snow has come to shut me in they say
From all the vaunted joys of men, but nay:
They wrong me, soul! my tender curve of sky
Is just as blue as theirs and just as high.
The wind, the stars . . . how keen! The hours run
Dove fleet; my little realm is fair to see
As towns, with fretted faces on the sun,
Taking the bubbled airs with ecstasy.

Mauve dawn, with lucent amber tiger barred,
Sits in my house all Jesus sweet with nard
Anointed feet; the naked hazels sway
Upon the hills in dance the livelong day;
And hieratic chants of trees upon the verge
Of this, my snow-bright world, more swift than wings
Snatch me beyond the moan of time, the ceaseless surge,
Unto the still, white, beatific heart of things.

Misanthrope

I muse alone in the amber evening
Till a star smites heaven like a bugle call,
I am tired of mirth, I am sick of grieving:
Weary of winter and weary of fall.

And my heart would rise in this Paradise weather
But my feet are heavy, they cannot go
From the hills I love and the blooming heather
To the gates of vision where poppies blow.

I sigh for sleep and I dread the waking,
I struggle and writhe in this net of sky—
Oh life is fair at this new year's breaking
But sweeter, far sweeter it were to die.

Wise Lover

In the gray of the year when the trees are bare
And the thrush is gone from the glen,
The scent of the sweet wild roses spent,
Dear heart, will you love me then?
It's easy to kiss when the year's at spring
And the lark in the hedge makes gay,
It's easy to love in the rose of the year,
But how shall it be in the gray,
But how shall it be in the gray?

O heart of hearts, I have loved and learned
From the bloom to garner the sweet,
The spring is the beat of a swift blue wing,
All fair, but fleet, too fleet.
Like the lover bee, from days full blown
I have cozened a store of gold,
To lay at your feet in the gray of the year
I'll love you then as of old,
I'll love you then as of old.

Motto for Babbitts

Fear then to be truthful
And dare not to be good,
Lest they should come to take you
And nail you to a rood.

Little Bird

Little bird in the tree,
I can see
You are gay,
By the crook of your wing
And the debonnaire way
That you sway
When you sing.
Never were heard
Sweeter sounds, little bird.
Will you stay?
Like to joy you are brief,
None is constant but Grief—
He is true, he will stay
Not like you fly away.

Strive

Strive mightily,
Reward is in the striving.
Sun or wind
What power have they
To daunt
The heart of strength?
Sing like the trees
In battle with the gale;
Though quite dismembered
Still they shout a challenge,
Strive mightily!
Better your armour
Polished up with blows,
Than hanging rusty
On a frame
Grown weak with ease.
Strive mightily
And when the night
Grows sullen with the day
And tears the flowered garland
From her throat,
Your calm eyes shall behold
The evening star,
All unafraid of death
Or life to come.

Prometheus

"Evening bringeth all things home."
SAPPHO.

"Evening bringeth all things home:"
Bee through honied dusk
Redolent of musk;
Languid sheep; the foam
On weary ocean tossed;
The little clouds, wind driven,
Star embossed,
Come home.
Only the great Titan heart
Of man, seeks out the smart
Of rain torn darkness,
Thunder driven night;
Insatiable, unbowed,
Like Lucifer the proud,
To storm the height.

Chanson Moquee

I like to watch the fleet go out
With sails of pearl and gray,
Before the sun comes leaping up
Above the misty bay.
As swallows loath to leave the south
They shake slow wings and fly
Where anguished spring awaits her loves
Beneath some foreign sky.

But better far I love to see
The ships ride home again,
With rubied glories in their sails
From visionary Spain.
Their holds are packed with pearls, I dream,
And yet I never wish
To stay when they unlade their gems,
Perhaps they may be fish.

Night Dirge

Why do you weep, little bell in the dusk?
The doves of the night through the clear darkness wing
And the still air is heavy with roses and musk,
The nightingales wake in the garden and sing;
There is peace in the forest beneath the moon's spell,
So why do you weep, little bell, little bell,
Why do you weep little bell?

Why do you mourn, little bell in the night?
The cascades of heaven rain beauty around.
See, the sun-ardent marigolds folded up tight
Bow their sleepy heads down to the dew-feathered ground,
And the elf horns are ringing through dale and through dell,
So why do you mourn, little bell, little bell?
Why do you mourn, little bell?

Why do you cry, little bell in the dark?
"I weep for Collette, she is gone . . . she is fled . . .
With her violet eyes and her voice like the lark
Where the silence is grim in the house of the dead."
They spray all the darkness with waves of your knell
And cry as you will, little bell, little bell;
Cry as you will, little bell.

Francis Thompson

The winds are all about me as I go,
Wild with the thunders of that nameless Name—
The blood-red moon grows pallid, cold as snow;
The stars, sere leaves across the heavens blow,
The sun dies out in glory, quenched in flame.

Ah Christ! That feet must cling and cling to clay
While spirit winged with vision far outstrips
The thought-plumed seraph! Bitter is the day
And from the night is sweetness fled away—
Sun blind, I only know Apocalypse.

Spring Truant

Keats at study with the surgeon—
Ho, that is a merry tale!
Dreaming how the maples burgeon,
Misty red against the pale,
Sun-radiant air of April;
How the pasch-flower skies the vale.

Did they wonder, death desired,
When your eyes stared off in space
(Eyes like pansies, dream inspired)
At the light behind your face,
Like a glow-worm in the darkness
Shining through the Queen Anne's lace?

What the gain with books to grapple?
Ardent sun was in the trees,
Throwing peacock-feather dapple
On the brook's young ecstasies,
Till your dear brain buzzed with fancies
Like a hive of honey bees.

Best beloved, they could not follow
Where your heart was wont to be,
Careless as a vagrant swallow
Raptured in a beechen tree;
Teaching mortals, deathless truant,
How a poet may be free.

The Poet to the Mob

(A verse for Shelley)

I will sing no more the songs that heal,
I will leave the tunes that charm,
I will walk no more on the travelled road,
I will shrink no more from harm;
You have not danced at my piping
You that barter there in the marts,
You have not danced, and now my song
Shall break your hearts.

To a Star

(*A song for Alice Meynell*)

Frost flower, frost flower,
Snow cold violet,
What did your Beloved
When you two were met?

Ah! you need not answer,
Through the dark I spy
A snowflake all on fire
Hung in the western sky.

Change

When I met Mary by the hedge
In those dear days gone by,
Her rose-red lips I longed to kiss
But oh, I feared her eye.

Now after years of married life
It's quite the other way,
Her eyes I do not fear at all
But ah, those lips today.

Sappho to Her Lover

Bring me no olive crown, O poplar-slim young Thyrsis!
Set but the warm rose of your lips upon my brow,
The golden-wreathed Athena well may envy
This sweet, full-breasted happiness I vow.

Go not! Stay by my side lithe faun, your beauty burns me:
With you, on unvexed pinions soars my lagging song,
And dancing leaves shed lethargy upon me
While god-browed dreams from dim horizons throng.

You are the ultimate the Muse can give, song madness,
The near Arcadia where serene Olympus lies;
The queenly dawn has not such power to stir me
As those sweet flashes lighting your blue eyes.

Mestrovic Casts Two Statues

The lions of St. Mark roar silent greeting;
Nefertiti, black but lovely
Wears her mask of calm a shade less deep;
The Maid of Melos and great Michael's David
Glow more triumphant in their marble sleep.
Beauty walks again with man
Under the tranquil heaven,
A lightning-rose in the unmarred sky
Breaks into flower,
The morning stars renew their song of wonder
And man, the god-beloved, awakes to dreams of
power.
Time—down the blue lane outstretched forever,
Cowers before the lifted spear,
The bead-drawn arrow fleet.
A bronze song of knotted sinew rings above him,
Once more, ... once more, his legioned years
Have met defeat.

The Crippled Poet

All day he sits in his wheel-chair on the terrace,
The high terrace, above the tennis court where young boys play;
A slim birch leans like Pisa's tower behind him
Weaving a web of changing light and shadow through the day.

Pale are his hands, paler than dew-drowned lilies,
Fragile and white as the delicate rim the May moon shows;
His eyes are weary with lightning flash of vision
And searing pain has burned from his parchment cheeks the rose.

The world cries hail to the glittering sword of his fancy,
With envious eyes at his place and his work well done;
But he, the poet, watches the court below him—
Stabbed with a laugh, or the flash of a lithe, young body bronzed with sun.

Far Places Call

I am tired of reading books
They are like men whose souls have died;
Houses that frown upon some lonely road
With no lights laughing through the dusk.
Why scan the musty page,
When nature's palimpsest
Is decked with new enchantment every day,
And beauty's mirror is held up
To those who will to see?
Come, let us fare forth in the dark
Crowned with a song;
Behold, the night has caught
A million golden poppies to her breast,
To gleam with every gusty breath she draws.
Come, let us wander
Through the gardens of the world,
Look on the flower faces there, of men
Swayed by each breath of wind that blows
Down from the silent mountain of eternity.

A Sailor's Song

(For Mona)

The winds blow high, the winds blow low,
Skies weep, dark waters frown,
But arms are white and lips are red
In every sea-coast town;
And be lips red as passion flowers,
What is that, pray, to me?
My Mary lives in Columkill
Beside the Irish Sea.

The dusk has set the lights adance
Upon the coast near-by,
My jolly mates have sought the inn
Where wine is flowing high,
Oh let them woo deceitful wine
I shall not join their glee,
While Mary waits in Columkill
Beside the Irish Sea.

There, where the shy white violets bloom
Like pearls in grassy deeps,
High on a bluff above the town
My lass her vigil keeps.
'Twas there I told her of my love
Beneath a fair thorn tree
In the warm spring at Columkill
Beside the Irish Sea.

A Sailor's Song (*Continued*)

The gambling hells are packed with men
From ships along the quay,
Shrill violins and women shout,
Eyes gleam with lust of play;
But I'm a-hoarding of my gold,
My wedding soon will be
In the gray church at Columkill
Beside the Irish Sea.

The winds blow high, the winds blow low,
The heavens mourning wear,
Dark skies are naught to sailor lads
As long as love is fair,
And so a song blooms in my heart
To hear the church bell's glee
This bridal morn in Columkill
Beside the Irish Sea.

From the Sybil's Book at Christmas Dawning

(A song for the "little children")

The scudding cloud has heard in the night
From the fretted forest white with frost,
A glittering Word, a singing Word,
And youth has won and age has lost.

We shall grow young my soul,
As young as Bethlehem,
Brows bound with fadeless green of holy bay;
The fire dies before the tents of Shem
As sinks the day star in the blaze of day.
And all the age old paths, the weary roads
Are glad with children singing in the way,
The orb of earth runs piping round the sun,
And like the sky knows naught of yesterday.
For Jacob's ladder has grown obsolete
Shepherds can tell. The ancient is undone.
Even the breath of winter grows May-sweet
The stars bow down, earth and the heaven are one.

The scudding cloud has heard in the night
From the fretted forest white with frost,
A glittering Word, a singing Word,
And youth has won and age has lost.

Comme Ci Comme Ca

My fond young love was false to me
And very sad was I,
For one long day I hid away
And could do nought but cry.

But since my love is back with me
I've bought a gown of blue,
Put in my hair a ribbon fair
For I am fickle too.

He Who Fears Height Shall Reach the Depths

He who aims not at heaven, needs must be
Content to suffer ultimate sad hell!
All streams with rippled longing seek the sea—
Star-swift with mournful crying, swell on swell
They wail through Babylonian valleys sick,
Ah sick for home—The little tarns, the ponds
Quiet beneath the sky, all heaven thick
With regal lilies sown and sworded fronds
Of blue flag, are unmoved toward some dim sweet
Half guessed—They smile on any hour that lifts blue wings;
Their end? A brackish swamp—the slime and noisome things . .

Smiles

I wish you'd stop
Throwing stones at me—
Your aim
Is all too sure:
They fall
Into my heart
And splash!
The ripples go
Out to the very limits
Of my being.
I wish you'd stop
Throwing stones at me.

A Thought for Too Nice People

Heartsease in my garden blows,
But not the rose;
The sun drunk
Nectar-bosomed thing,
Red with dew wine of the spring,
Foresakes me with her perfumed shoon.
My garden lacks, why, why is this?
In all its beds of quiet bliss
The signet of authentic June?

Dear heart, can you not see
Why no rose
Ever grows
In your walled garden?
Ah calm one, cold one, unstirred, free,
You shun the thorn
And so, please God,
You lack the ecstasy.

The Cavalier

"Phyllis with the fair white hands,
Under your window I come riding:
Throw me a rose, a red rose, love!
Why don't you answer me? Where are you hiding?
A red rose, sweet, as red as your lips
I kissed but yesterday under the thorn,
For I must ride out with the king, my lass,
When he takes the field on the morrow morn."

"Phyllis with fair white hands!
Open your window, set night flying
With morning eyes, oh light of my heart!
See, stars are burning low, pale moon is dying.
The pale moon, love, as round as your breast
Where the sheer lawn clings to you, close as my arm
When we clung last together across the hedge—
Safe, as we thought, from a world of harm,

"Phyllis with the fair white hands!
Nothing, she answers; see her lying
Fair hands clasped above her heart
Heart still forever more, safe from our crying.
To our crying deaf, and to clash of steel
When I ride out tomorrow. Yea, by the mass!
Ten Roundheads shall sleep as cold as we,
For my heart lies dead with my pretty lass."

Gargoyle

Gargoyle, Gargoyle on the roof
Pensive and piquant,
Are you dizzy leaning out
At such a horrid slant?

"Child above the chequered street
Winds are making song,
So I laugh with stony glee
The whole day long.

When the rain beats on my face
How I puff and blow,
Spouting streams of water on
The street below.

All the people scatter then,
Ho! It makes me laugh
As they rush about the square
Like wind-blown chaff.

Yet you wonder, little child,
At my grimacing,
Knowing not how droll you are,
Strange two-legged thing!"

Gargoyle, Gargoyle on the roof
Giggling and gay,
I'll come back to talk with you
Again some other day.

Sad Lover

The blackbird sings in the willow tree,
The bluebird trills in the larch,
And the cherry trees are white with spray
On the windy waves of March;
In the hollows the young streams leap and play,
But my heart, my heart is sore.
Grey eyes I love, when will you come?
Never . . . no more . . . no more!

The birch tree weaves at her crown of green,
The wind-flower wakes in the grass,
In the orchard croft a redbreast sings
As the sun-flecked hours pass,
And the dawning its sheaved poppies flings
Like a flame at my cottage door.
Grey eyes I love, when will you come?
Never . . . no more . . . no more!

It seems an age since I saw you last,
At morning light yesterday;
When the sky was blue though cloudy-barred
And my young love had its way.
Then the sun passed by like a leaping pard
Now the day lags, my life is frore.
Grey eyes I love, when will you come?
Never . . . no more . . . no more!

To Dante

Crowned with fair laurel keepest thou the height
Of thundrous song. where none may call thee peer:
The lambent lightnings of thy fame each year
Take added brilliance. rending with their might
The very heavens. Thou art chiefest knight
Of that round table flashing with the cheer
Of sweet-toned Virgil. and the bard most dear
The deep-browed Homer rimmed with holy light.

Thine is no puny piping: like the sea
Storm-stirred with magic music is thy song.
Or like the splendid chanting of that choir
Of wondrous seraphs when there walked with thee,
Flame clad. thy heart's beloved. midst the throng
Of Paradise where thou did'st tune thy lyre.

Caprice

From my high window
In an office building, soaring
Like a tall mast uplifted
Above the smoking spume,
I watch the traffic symphony
Flowing below me,
Hear the rich rumble
Of the cello street cars boom.
Staccato ring of clumping hooves,
Fluty purr of motors,
From which the changing traffic lights
Draw acid overtones.
Pedestrians, like black notes,
Scurry and scamper
Across a manuscript of street
Measure-barred with stones.
Andante in the crowded square;
Scherzo on the boulevard;
Through the green parkway
Furioso rings.
And on the stone balcony
Of a slim hotel yonder,
A prima donna sparrow
Puffs her breast and sings.

Proof of Dreams

Give me armour, Merlin, Merlin!
Mail of proof," the king's son saith.
"Make me laugh at slings and arrows,
Let me mock at barbéd death."

"Stronger than Joyeuse my sword is,
Brighter than Excaliber.
What the worth of sword or courage
When the deadly arrows whirr?"

"I have bought me linkéd waistcoats,
Casques of moon-bright steel a score,
Yet the spear thrusts of the giants
Pierce my flesh and wound me sore.

"Armour?" Queried crusty Merlin,
Laughter blooming on his lips;
"Would you be like bold Achilles
When the Greek seas teemed with ships?"

"Dandled in the sacred river
Till his flesh immortal grew?
Give me then your soul in barter,
I will do the same for you."

Niall crossed himself, "Hence Wizard!"
I will cleave your skull in twain.
Tempt me not, begone accursed!"
Merlin vanished from the plain.

Weary journeys went young Niall
To the Wizard of the North,
In the land of sleet-gray forests
Whence the mighty winds set forth.

In a cavern hung with lightning
Sat the wizard old and sage
With the Sybil's book before him,
Starred with wisdom every page.

You shall have your armour, stripling!
Such as all men fear to see;
But twice seven years, as Jacob
Served for Rachael, toil for me.

And when night has stilled earth babble
By her beauty; with a song
You, yourself, must forge the armour
Only you can make it strong.

Be it so, frost-bearded wizard!
This lithe frame shall serve you well,
But my soul is mine, unsullied
Lest my roe-swift feet walk hell.

Long the days were, hard the serving:
When night burgeoned, in a gorge
Deep down in the glass-cold mountains
Niall labored at his forge.

With two oak-thewed dwarfs to help him,
Beating rythmically and slow,
Niall sang the songs his mother
Crooned once in the long ago.

In the substance of his armour
Pale young dreams were prisoned fast,
Flower of the frost, snow fury
When it rides upon the blast.

Sword-browed fancies; veiléd, fearful,
Tried gold from moon tresses shorn,
Star on lucent star emblazoned,
Such as deck the shield of morn.

Till at length the swift years passing,
Like a moon glow of the night,
Made an end of toil and bondage
Niall's step grew shadow-light.

Girt about with swan-bright armour
All his soul began to sing,
Lightning in his blue eyes sparkled
Like the glances of a king.

Through the land he rode unbeaten
Making wicked men to fear,
Nought could harm his life or scathe him,
Arrow swift nor steel-crowned spear.

He was lapped in dream-strong tissue,
Such as holy Michael bore
As he smote the rebel legions
In the van of God's great war.

And he dies not, but forever
When the merle and mavis sing,
He, a King, rides forth in armour
Through the glittering woods of Spring.

To a Young Lad Who Doubted

When from your petalled beauties sheaf on sheaf,
Hale Time shall pluck your savours, one by one,
Let not your heart grow sad like winter sun
Nor spend one moment in the house of Grief.
Here, in this flame, all loveliness is brief:
The rainbow fades with rose but scarcely spun,
The mary-gold at first frost turns to dun
And green tides ebb to gray upon the leaf.

Here is no lasting city! Be not snared
With golden days, they die upon the west.
Life plays at fence; bluff Death is not outdared,
He gathers all things to his clammy breast.
But waking time will dawn at changeless spring
Where Death is dead and life's a lovely thing.

Lark-Wise

When I behold how men go down to death
Like moon-thralled Keats, with half their work undone;
I fear the fleet-foot hour, the hasting sun
That wastes the rose he opens with his breath.
The all-unsaid mocks what the too-soon saith;
Thin starred with rhyme the languid hours run,
As puff-balls blown they shatter one by one
Where chill wind blows, where keen frost withereth.
All is not lost, the earth new flecked with green
Some semblance wears of immortality,
Past yonder hill through tortured oaks I see
The drowsy morning smoulder; soft, unseen,
The blue mazed lark pipes to the nascent May
Careless of the time and death beyond this day.

The Boat

"The soul was in his body like a sailor in his boat."
PLATO

My little boat it does not know
The port to which I sail,
It sports upon the jade-smooth sea
It shrinks before the gale.

It fears the wrathy winds of God,
The white rose of the foam,
It does not ken that gale and sea
But urge it swiftly home.

While I, within the bonny barque,
Am singing like the lark,
I have smiled at blood-red morning,
I have mocked at still-born dark.

The wingéd stars above the night
Chart out the way for me,
I hear the chaunt of nightingales
Above the sad voiced sea.

And I shall roam the spring-gay wood
Upon the blessed land,
When this, my boat, with torn sail furled
Lies broken in the sand.

Cuckoo and the Poet

Cuckoo will sing
The first in spring,
Before the nightingale
Can wing his way from Italy
To linger in our dale.
And when the morning
Shows his breast
At my horizon's bound,
He rises from his chilly nest
To make the woods resound.
"Cuckoo . . cuckoo . .
Cuckoo . . cuckoo . . ." Let be!
I wonder if he calls his love,
Or does he laugh at me?

Cuckoo must know
I love you so;
The flowers know it, dear!
For violets lift their heads and sigh
Whenever you appear,
The primrose preens
Her tissue gown
And whispers to the hedge;
But cuckoo, when you go to town,
Cries at my window ledge,

"Cuckoo . . cuckoo . .
Cuckoo . . cuckoo . . ." Let be!
I wonder if he calls his love,
Or does he laugh at me?

Cuckoo is glad
To see me sad,
He irks me at his will.
Though buttercups break through the mist
Of green upon the hill,
And time goes clad
In rose and gold,
My spirit will not soar
Still, still, I hear that little scold
Outside my study door,
"Cuckoo . . cuckoo . .
Cuckoo . . cuckoo . . ." Let be!
I wonder if he calls his love,
Or does he laugh at me?

Il Moro to Beatrice

If I had loved you less, your sunny hair
Had not outvied the gold of far Cathay;
Your gold and ivory scarce outlast a day
Of fulsome summer, yet to me it were
Of little moment that the world is fair
Since you must go the age-old, plaintive way,
Your beauty scattered as the wind-blown spray,
White petals eddying in the sea-blue air.
If I had loved you less I would not beat
My forehead on the earth that you must die.
The autumn, rich with sheaves of yellow wheat
Mocks at your richness, knowing well how I,
Lonely, must face the winter and its sleet—
Lashed fields where all the great winds moan and cry.

Evensong—The Lark

Wing of grey in the blue dusk floating,
Light as a snowflake, soft as foam.
Song-brave lover, why are you gloating?
Of home I flute, I am winging home.

Winging home through the sunset flaunting,
Quinquireme of song treasure, I
Plow the deep with measures haunting
Like the spume of stars in the still night sky.

I have clad my song in the silk of trebles,
Velvet of minors, pile on pile;
With my wing I have scorned the stars as pebbles
Till I gaze on the earth from the heaven's stile.

From heaven's stile through the clear sardonyx,
The lambent west where all beauty dies,
Clouds below are like bubbled onyx
And the utmost heaven affrays mine eyes.

The utmost heaven, my clear song sickens—
Oh Ultima Thule of all song is this,
Where the rippled sound into silence quickens,
Where the strife of song knows the Singing Bliss.

As a meteor flare on the dew-chilled night,
I fall to the earth in the waning light.

Sing a Song of Summit

Summit is a street I love,
Opulent and wide spaced
Yet with a charming disarray
Which is the highest art.
It lacks the smug coldness
Of all city pavement,
And not without reason
For Summit has a heart.
Motors seem to feel it,
They sing as they travel
Along its smooth spaces
Chequered with green.
Beauty seems to dwell there
From morning to evening,
Moon-silver, sun-gold
On the elm choir screen.
Calm with conscious loveliness
Churches wait at corners,
For lagging feet or weary feet
That seek of God repose:
The medieval House of Hope
Like Magdalen at dawning
Breathes forth a carillon of prayer
Song sweet aloes;
And nearer the river
Illumined, hand wrought,
Like a queen's book of hours

St. Luke's pure facade,
Upon the green lectern
Of trees all about it
Is spread out superb
To the glances of God.
Sixteenth Street in Washington
Lined with prim embassies
Is like a maiden lady
Too long unkissed;
Michigan Boulevard
Is boisterous with busses;
Riverside in old New York
Has a forked beard of mist.
But Summit is the sun beloved,
An avenue for poets,
A street for young children
And all who love play,
A gay street, a gamin street,
A street of quiet laughter,
Where the thrush in the thicket
Pipes rondels all day.

For an Old Lady Who Did Not Fear Death

I've run a goodly race with you, O Death!
To find you winner at the end.
There is no lightness in my step and breath
Is failing. I'll not seek to mend
The issue, be it sharp or sad.
I know not why, but I am strangely glad
To see this tremulous young spring rush by;
I bought my daylight with a wailing cry
But with a smile I'll sell it, quite content
To have my new life start with merriment.
Strike when you will! This flint will throw a spark
To light me if the way be dark.

Equality

Peacock feathers are for kings
Not common clods 'tis said,
But lord and clown when night drops down
And time for bed,
Each seeks the fleece of silly geese
To rest his head.

Brave Ending

(*For Imogen Guiney*)

Sad is the ending of all sweet singing
As even the thrushes know,
So they send a song with the moment winging
A song of honey and snow.

When leaves are falling and sad winds calling
They leave their rondels and go;
With a wing for the storm, a song for the wave
And the morrow we never know.

Journey

When I went down to Casterbridge
The little birds were gay,
The blackbirds and the thrushes brown
Were singing all the way.

And wood-doves from the thicket called
With wistful, tender notes—
As if their throbbing, primrose hearts
Were beating from their throats.

When I came back from Casterbridge
The woods were cool and still,
The blackbird piped no merry note,
The sun was past the hill.

But I came gayer than I went
Along each weary mile,
For I had left my heart behind
On Molly Brazen's stile.

Vision

Last night I rowed out across the lake
With dripping silver on each oar,
And met a little pixie maid
Upon the further shore.

Her eyes were grey as sleeted yews
She had three moon-glows in her hair,
Her gown was green as grass in June,
Her tiny feet were bare.

She played at "catch me" with the moon;
And as she skipped she sang a song,
Like to the sound the sedges make
When the breeze is strong.

I tried to catch her, 'twas in vain,
More swift was she than hound or hind;
Fleet as the laughing thistledown
In the prankish wind.

But still her song with me remains,
A faery strophe, hushed and sweet,
And I am lonely on the moors
Or the crowded street.

Ballade on Lost Youth

The morning comes in cloth of gold
With chilly violets at her breast,
She may wax grey but, sooth, not old
However blear the waning west.
But I, poor fool, am not so blest;
My youth is spent, a goodly store,
And life is like a bitter jest,
Those honied days return no more.

How often have I braved the cold
Ere phoenix sun had left his nest,
To see the east, a marigold
On nature's glowing palimpsest;
With gold upon my naked breast
I'd swim the lake from shore to shore,
But now I wear a double vest,
Those honied days return no more.

Then was I like a colt new foaled,
The snow was furred, the sun caressed;
My cheeks were red, my eye was bold,
I knew each lark and eagle nest.

My life was one, long, thrilling quest,
Today I scarcely pass the door.
What boots the money in my chest?
Those honied days return no more.

ENVOY

Browning, the childhood days are best,
When blood is wine and feet can soar.
I am with books and thought oppressed,
Those honied days return no more.

The Ever-Judas

Your treachery was wide as Hell is deep,
Yet puny, small and mean beyond compare—
Reward? But thirty coins you could not keep,
That kiss—a knotted rope, unstarred despair.

How could you trade the palpable bright gold,
Sword-smiting Beauty, for a price so small?
Your magpie soul flew over wealth untold
To dote on nothing, to forego the All.

How much we all offend, be frank my soul!
Choosing the rubble with the gold in sight;
Twice seven times we sell Him in a day
And oh! That kiss—the garden and the night!

Ave Atque Vale

Out along the twilight margins
Where the last sun embers yearn,
Little trees all tawny orange
Sway like holy lamps and burn.

Tremulous, through falling hazes
Spring's first blackbird braves the frost,
With a spray of blossomed music
Careless from his bounty tossed.

"Take the spring, my boy, 'tis coming—
Take the spring, life's flowers fall
All too soon when summer's over;
White hawk winter spoils them all.

"Take the primrose then, and tulip,
Blue veined violet, fragrant broom;
They are sweet while you can smell them,
Scentless are they on your tomb."

To the St. Gaudens Statue

(The Monument erected by Henry Adams in the Rock Creek Cemetery at Washington, D. C.)

Satyrs and fauns awake! Come out and see,
A god has come to earth, make haste, arise!
Behold him, throned among the laurels; in his eyes
A look that broods and pierces. Yet to be
Is present with him: all that ever we
Forget he knows, and yet, how very wise
He is with unvexed dreaming. O surprise
Him nymphs with pelted rosebuds! Dance with glee!
Greece cannot die while beauty lives. Give praise
In this green grove forever more, and dole
Your songs not sparingly, or with his lays
The spendthrift thrush will shame you; this his goal—
Where frozen music of a face can raise
A white-hot wraith of beauty in the soul.

Recluse

I have builded me a window
In the tower where I dwell,
I have builded me a window
To save my soul from hell.

I have builded it with cunning
Against the morning light,
Of rose and azure crystals
With golden shields bedight.

There are saints in gleaming armour,
Nimbused angels, like a cloud
On the amber misted valley
When the trees with fruit are bowed.

And one thrush, alone forsaken
In a flaming maple tree,
Neck outstretched upon the sunshine,
Drunk with lilting melody.

Let the world wag on below me,
I shall see it never more,
Save upon my storied window
When the sun's warm cascades pour.

And my heart lies calm within me,
In the tower where I dwell,
Gazing on my window garden
That has saved my soul from hell.

Alone

We are too much with others,
Clacking minds which never weave a thought
Starred with a silver fancy, moon inwrought.
Vain is the brave essay to know another's heart,
Distance; the salt tide in our veins, flows in between.
They call us brothers—
No! But we are kings! Why strive in vain
To bridge what lies beyond the span of arching iris hung aloft?
Each is sole lord of tranquil valley, field and orchard croft,
The plenteous beauty of a rich domain,
Or duned wastes wind sculped with fantasies.
Beware! Who once invades learns some day to his cost
High though the battle, 'tis already lost.
Alone we come, alone at last we go
Clad in our veils of beauty, footing slow
A dance, the dance micabre never done;
Music? The clash of pale recurring moon on orbéd sun!
Lonely are we, yes ever, ever so,
Flesh has its unspanned seas; what can love know
Beyond the silken press of breast on breast?
Swift as a lightning flash from east to west
We come alone in glory and must go
Alone, beyond the farthest wash of twilight glow.

The Mourner

Night and the smell of wild plum on the air
My heart knocks loudly on its ivory doors,
The wind is like a kiss upon the river,
There is a bacchic dancing on the moors.

Night and the smell of wild thyme on the wind,
My soul is straining at the postern gate;
The moon is weaving magic webs of song,
The forest fingers beckon . . . and then wait.

Night and the smell of wild grape everywhere,
The enchanted, pulsing, night has banished sleep,
Circlets of wild thorn bind my brow with flame,
The latch is broken . . . . only Christ has stayed to weep.

Song of the Psalmist

You ask me what a song is?
I doubt that I can tell you;
How shall any dreamer tell his dream
When night and sleep have fled?

It is sunlight and moonlight
And bright cascades of laughter,
Star shine and far shine
And laces of the frost,
Sulphur flowered lightning
With black thunder after,
Night flower, bright flower
With pale dreams intercrossed.

You ask me what my Lord is?
I doubt that I can tell you;
How shall any singing span the sky
And plumb the spume of hell?

He is fire sheen and snow sheen
And waterfalls of madness,
Sad sword and glad sword
And arrows of the sun;
Icy hearted winter
And the springtime gladness,
Wan rose, dawn rose
With wild song over-run.

Mecum

Above the meadows white with snow
The wailing winds of winter go,
Then all the trees bend down and sigh
And wave their bony hands on high;
Hard, shrunken hands, dead hands are they
Reaching to rend the heavens grey,
As over meadows white with snow
The wailing winds of winter go.

Across my spirit's drifted snow
With wailing, winds of winter go,
Dead hands are reaching from the past
To drag me down, the wintry blast
Is not more fierce, but God is near . . .
He takes my hand till dawn appear
And makes the dusk with roses glow
Above the meadows white with snow.

Cause of Our Joy

(*For some persons who say Our Lord never smiled*)

Lady most benign and sweet,
See me kneeling at your feet
Clothed in sober garb of gloom;
Bend down, set dusking skies abloom
With rose-flower laughter hushed and sweet.

They say your Jesus never smiled
And gentlest laughter knew Him not;
Could it be, Mother, they forgot
The time He was a little child?
Or dare they say you never smiled?

Could He look on the evening star
Twinkling serenely through the dusk,
(His Stella Maris, sweet as musk)
And not fling laughter's gates ajar
In echo of His evening star?

Through velvet of the purple night
Seeing the censered almond trees
Fume with rare spice at every breeze,
Would He not laugh with young delight
To see you smiling on the night?

Smile, then, on me! My heart is sore.
Set laughter chiming up the sky.
Who laughs best, knows well how to die!
Zacchaeus in the sycamore . . . . . .
Christ must have laughed. Forevermore
My sides and not my heart be sore!

Lady most benign and sweet,
See me kneeling at your feet
Clothed in sober garb of gloom;
Bend down, set dusking skies abloom
With rose-flower laughter hushed and sweet.

At Mass

(To Rev. M. D'Arcy, S. J.)

White Rose of my hope, the cold winds rise and quicken,
Blue spears of all the horrid host surround me, wave on wave.
Come before the white dawn above the dark trees sicken,
"O Salutaris Hostia,"
For Thou alone can save.

White Rose of my love, my red heart leaps and dances
Before Thy face as ruddy David danced once long ago.
(Swords of sun at still noon, the honey of Thy glances)
"Qui coeli pandis ostium,"
Thy people wait below.

White Rose of my joy, with ecstasy I hearken
To silver rain of tinkling bells about Thy altar-tree.
We, upon Thy swift wings, where shade nor shadows darken,
"O Gloriosa Victima,"
Are lifted up with Thee.

Saint Teresa

Undaunted daughter of the Love Divine,
Light of thine age, dispelling with thy glow
The shades of evil, such a love as thine
Transcends all glories of the earth below.
Fairer than dawning, sweeter than the wine
At Cana in that marriage long ago,
Was thy Beloved, Who made thee scorn the show
Of earth, and close around His mercy twine.
Freed from all earthly blindness, thy deep gaze
Was charmed with wonders in the starry sky,
The hands of angels tore away the haze
Which hides the blinding face of the Most High,
And thy rapt soul was smitten so with praise
To live were pain, 'twere ecstasy to die.

Saintcraft

Time the grey miser deals me
His gold with grudging hand
But like a prodigal, for God I'll spend it
Flinging it upon the breeze like sand.

Ballade for the Annunciation

The rimy marsh weeds blush with rose
And sleeted haws in violet fare,
Green sun-darts flash across the snows
Which lap the world in kingly vair.
The frosty wreaths on plum and pear
Droop like cascades of scented spray,
Remembered thrush song fills the air
Since Janivere hath wedded May.

The silver morning ruddy grows
Beyond the forest seamed and bare,
Masking each tree with amber glows,
Godiva-like in stoled hair;
Soft Hesperus breathes everywhere
And redbreast, pert as any jay,
Grows blithe and bold and debonnaire
Since Janivere hath wedded May.

Now merry lads in silken hose
Forth from warm firesides will dare;
No chill wind nips at cheek and nose
Nor bids them from the dance forbear.
Down in the jewelled brakes the hare

Thrills to a hidden music gay,
He hath no dread of hawk or snare
Since Janivere hath wedded May.

ENVOY

Ancient of Days, I have no care;
Winter of sin is fled away,
And all our days be blue and fair
Since Janivere hath wedded May.

Flosculus Immortalis

"With the exception of the inimitable jasmine, which it is impossible to counterfeit, all flowers are perfectly represented by the blend of aromatic spirits."

JORIS HUYSMANS.

O Jasmine of immortal years,
With sweetness which no art
Of man may simulate; send down
Your dew of fragrance on my heart
So long embattled with its horrent fears.
Rain down as soft as dew upon the grass.
"Rorate coeli desuper!" They pass,
These other flowers; the magic glass
Of one bright year beholds them fade
Narcissus-like into the shade
Of ashy nothingness. Dismayed
Am I, O Jasmine!
Young Immortal Jasmine, rain
Your arrowed scent upon me,
Tender pain!
O Vine
More bland than wine,
Bend down with sworded savors,
Hear my call!
What hands are these, what feet
To scale the wall
Which past the laughter of remotest star

Towers like music, where your flowers are?
Sweeter than frangipani, pink, or nard,
The rainbowed iris, or the lily white,
Fairer than lilac, heaven-like thick-starred,
And moon flower in the quiet of the night.
O emblematic scent
Glad with all wonderment!
Eternal Jasmine, young as rose-bloom red
That burgeons when the dawn sings overhead,
Come, set me free
From potent spell of every earthly bloom.
Flowers of the summer grass
They die, alas!
And You alone are sweet immortally.

The Poet

"And God hath given to me to speak as I would, and to conceive thoughts worthy of those things that are given me."

WISDOM 7-15.

O God I dare not then exult,
That Thou by rote
Hath taught me not to sing.
No song, thrush-wise, is native to my throat,
'Tis well! I had grown bold
Enough perhaps to fling
Cascaded beauty in the teeth of sun . . . .
Beggared of song, save only Thee,
Thou laughest at Thy work and say, "Well done!"
The unbound fettered, the unchained least free.

St. Francis Tells the World

You ask me why I love you not, O world, 'tis simple,
Since Mary stole my budding heart for her dear Son
There's nothing left you crave, nor sweet nor petal—
You want a heart . . . . Go hence, I had but one!

God's Fool

Lord Jesus, to thy manger
A broken heart I bring;
The fool's bells and the motley
And every comic thing.

Wilt Thou to have me Jesus?
Ah, what is this surprise!
Two little baby hands outstretched,
The laughter of blue eyes.

Love

Love has no need of seed and growth
Its flowers bloom in a lightning stroke—
Saul came upon Apocalypse,
Before he yet had worn the yoke,
And all his winter changed to spring
At one sharp flash of visioning.

Postlude

Plow deep my heart, oh Lord,
It far too long has lain
Fallow to changeful skies
The kiss of sun and rain;
Plow well the furrow
With your iron sword
Of sorrow, and when I have watered all
The soil with my own tears,
Bend down with the blue springtide of your smile . . .
A tendril green . . . a bud . . . one blossom, Lord!
That rest to some great silver moth may yet afford
Before the harvest time a little while.

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